



*Cobb County...Expect the Best!*

## Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis



### Stakeholder Roundtables Summary December 2011

In December 2011, a series of five stakeholder roundtables was conducted for the Connect Cobb Alternatives Analysis. The purpose of the roundtables was to gain insight from community members, planning partners, key stakeholders, special interest groups, elected and appointed officials, and agency staff about the study's purpose, need, goals and objectives as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate the study's alternatives.

The individual roundtables were organized by topic and included transportation and air quality, land use, economic development, environment, and financial. Over eighty attendees participated in the roundtables, many attending more than one or even all five. A broad cross-section of stakeholders was achieved with representation from the general public; local, state and regional agency staff; the business community; environmental groups; civic organizations; and advocacy groups. The following table lists the details for each roundtable. All roundtables were held at Cobb County Department of Transportation.

<i><b>Topic</b></i>	<i><b>Date and Time</b></i>	<i><b>Number of Attendees</b></i>
Transportation and Air Quality	December 6, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	43
Land Use	December 6, 2011 6:00 -7:30pm	30
Economic Development	December 8,2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	29
Environment	December 8, 2011 6:00 – 7:30pm	19
Financial	December 13, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	21

Upon arrival at the roundtables, attendees signed-in, were offered an information folder and asked to select seating in at a six-person group table with a facilitator. Each roundtable began with a short presentation directed at the entire audience, followed by a breakout group exercise. See attached documents for agenda and handouts for each roundtable.

In the breakout exercise, attendees were asked their thoughts on the draft goals and objectives, specifically how well they reflected the issues in the study area and if any pertinent statements had been left out. Next, attendees were asked to discuss the draft purpose and how well the statement married with the goals and objectives. A facilitator guided the conversation, and a recorder documented the verbal comments. The following summaries detail the collective conversations compiled from each table at the individual roundtables. Also included are comments submitted by attendees after review of the summary notes.



## Land Use Roundtable Stakeholder Comments December 6, 2011

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### General Discussion

- Natural or Historic
  - Enhance tourism
  - Economic and Sustainable growth
- How to get people on transit
  - Look for concentrations and connect and promote redevelopment where transit should have been to start with
- Inclusion of some distressed properties just outside the nodes to benefit growth
  - Tax Payer Benefits
- Retail along US 41
  - How does the character change with transit
  - Some redevelopment
  - Interference with access to business
  - May improve since transit will move people
  - Don't know who it would impact
  - Possible trigger for redevelopment
- Possible Building Sites
  - Building under or up verses out
- Who will actually use this system?
  - Young Professionals
  - Blue Collar
- Parking is important land use near stations.
- I can see office mixed use along I-75 between Roswell Road and Sandy Springs.
- More condominiums and housing for the elderly should be provided.
- A transit system would result in the redevelopment and improvement of the existing multi-family residential land use.
- There are specific nodes of high use along the corridor that need improved pedestrian facilities and green space.
- The biggest problem for pedestrians along the corridor is the lack of connectivity. Develop pedestrian facilities within the high use node areas.
- US 41 and CSX line would be more conducive to redevelopment than I-75.
- Would like to see where the vacant land is along the corridor and properties that are underutilized (map).
  - Opportunity zones in Marietta- have been mapped
  - Cobb County study
- US 41 – would be impacting mostly commercial areas. CSX and I-75 would be impacting mostly single family. Need to ask what is the most advantageous and what has the most impact for the businesses and people going to these places. US 41 lends itself to that then.

- Delk Road and Kennestone Hospital area- good area to consider for mixed use development
- High density residential needs to support universities and hospitals. Or it needs to provide/be part of a balance between office, retail, and industrial.
- Walkability- need to look at the grades. Some areas not suitable for residential necessarily and then expect people to walk to the transit station. Ex: Windy Hill Road.
- Station locations need to bring in all the elements- getting people to the stations, economic development.
- There are a lot of employment centers within the corridor. The node doesn't have to exactly be at the employment location- companies would implement shuttle service if within certain distance and it is feasible.
- Connect with existing greenways/pathways and plans.

### **Comprehensive List of Comments Received Regarding the Proposed Need and Purpose Statement:**

"This Alternatives Analysis will focus on public transportation improvements that can best serve future demand, by building an integrated regional network that can support existing and future needs in the Northwest Corridor."

- Mirrors what came out of Concept 3
- May want to add something about the corridor's congestion ranking - from a listing of bad bottlenecks in the US. Also, the corridor is home 3 Fortune 500 Corporations – Home Depot, Genuine Parks, Coca Cola Enterprises.
- Include statement about importance of clean transportation alternatives. Prefer CNG/light rail over diesel.
- Clarification
  - Reduces Traffic Congestion
  - Sustainable Financially
  - Optimize trip time
  - Corridor Development
  - Interface with future regional transit networks while reducing travel times versus the no-build condition.
- There is nothing about cost effectiveness or accommodating bicycles and pedestrians
  - Planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities will help access to potential transit stations.
- Need to add Health Systems, this is a very important component
- Need to incorporate minimizing adverse environmental impacts into the need and purpose
- With regards to financial aspect of the Need and Purpose Statement
  - The primary objective is that this needs to be as cost effective as possible.
  - The secondary objective needs to include that the project be financially realistic to build/operate.
- Clarification
  - The P3 project should be included in analysis
    - It can be utilized for BRT
    - There would be a seamless integration for long distance and corridor commuting

## Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Ron Sifen

**From:** [Rsifen@aol.com](mailto:Rsifen@aol.com) [<mailto:Rsifen@aol.com>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2011 2:02 AM

**To:** [hansen-dederick@sycamoreconsulting.net](mailto:hansen-dederick@sycamoreconsulting.net)

**Subject:** Re: Connect Cobb Roundtables Summaries

Hi Kristine. I am requesting that this email be included in the official comments for this Alternatives Analysis study.

I have reviewed the meeting summaries from all 5 AA Roundtables, and I am alarmed at several omissions.

It is my understanding that the purpose of the 5 Roundtable sessions was to obtain and document public input. It is my understanding that the discussion summaries should include and document all comments, and not selectively omit or alter any comments, nor target certain types of comments for omission. Accurate consolidation would have been acceptable. Outright omission is unacceptable, and is evidence of bias.

I made the following comments during these Roundtables, and these comments should have been included in the meeting summaries. In most cases, there was extensive discussion about these points, so it is surprising that these points are completely omitted from the summaries of various Roundtables.

### Land Use Roundtable

The following points were discussed at the Land Use Roundtable, and should be included in the discussion summary for the Land Use Roundtable..

- \* The primary objective of this project should be alleviating traffic congestion.
- \* Other objectives are ok as long as they do nothing to obstruct alleviating traffic congestion.
- \* This project will cost billions of taxpayer dollars. The only way this is a good investment for taxpayers is if taxpayers get substantial traffic congestion relief for their investment.
- \* This project cannot contribute to alleviating traffic congestion unless it provides a transit alternative that meets the needs of commuters who currently drive their cars.
- \* Commuters will not use transit as an alternative to driving unless transit provides trip times that are reasonably competitive with driving.
- \* Time-competitive trip times cannot be achieved if there are too many stops. More stops results in slower trip times.
- \* Another person at the table took the "more stations" point of view saying that there were several properties along the Cobb Parkway route that were run down and in need of redevelopment, and that stations were needed in those locations in order to incentivize the redevelopment of those properties. I responded that Cobb taxpayers had no interest in having government spend billions of their tax dollars to incentivize the



redevelopment of a few parcels of private property. I reiterated that this was a bad investment for taxpayers, and an inappropriate use of our tax dollars. (This discussion gets to a crucial issue regarding this project, and it was discussed extensively at the Land Use Roundtable so I don't see why it is not included in the summary. The same is true for my other points.)

\* On the "Walkability" bulletpoint in the summary, this is either an inaccurate description of my comments, or my comments were omitted. My point was that walkable places need to be flat, and that Cobb Parkway has many places with long steep hills that make walkability unlikely to succeed. I also pointed out that Cobb Parkway is a wide major highway that is extremely difficult for pedestrians to cross, and that it was unlikely that a walkable community could succeed in a place that is physically not easily walkable.

### - All of the above was discussed at the Land Use Roundtable, and it should be included in the discussion summary for the Land Use Roundtable.

#### Purpose and Objectives statement

\* At all 5 Roundtables, when we got to this part of the discussion, I recommended that the statement needed to state that cost-effectively alleviating traffic congestion was a primary objective.

### Please also note. This project is already marred by bias. Several Cobb County officials repeatedly declared this would be light rail, before the AA even started. This continued until numerous citizens questioned whether the AA was a sham, and the conclusions had already been predetermined. Even worse, at one point, Cobb almost approved spending millions of dollars to start building a transit station and parking in a specific location, which led to questions as to whether the AA was a sham, and that the conclusions were already predetermined, and also raising questions as to whether Cobb was attempting to force the AA to approve what was already being built!!!

If the process is supposed to document all points of view, and all comments and recommendations, then that is what this record should reflect. The summaries should not have all of these selective omissions. The meeting summaries be corrected. And again, I want all of my comments in this email to be included in the official records for this AA study.

Thanks

Ron Sifen

#### **Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Bob Hovey**

- The path of the routes shown on the concept maps is through mostly developed areas of Cobb. There are no big open areas.

- Condemnation proceedings under eminent domain to support the proposed routes will be extremely unpopular politically in Cobb, where property rights are stoutly defended.

- Cobb County has an official map of redevelopment areas, and some incentives to promote replacement infrastructure therein. Station locations should support those objectives.

And, most importantly, the following comment seems to have been missed altogether:

Transit development needs to support the existing cities in Cobb. This includes Smyrna, Marietta, Kennesaw, and Acworth directly, and other cities through bus connectors. These cities already have a "sense of place" and infrastructures amenable to the higher densities needed to support ridership. Recent "Live, Work, Play" developments created as islands away from Cobb's existing cities have struggled. For example Ridenour and West Village both have fallen short of original expectations. Transit stops must be close to and directly support existing cities.



**Land Use Roundtable  
Stakeholder Exercise  
December 6, 2011**

**DRAFT Land Use Goals and Objectives**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
Use land more efficiently	Reduce parking needs Increase live-work-play activity centers
Increase housing choices	Increase diversity of housing for all income levels Establish jobs to housing balance Increase transit oriented development Increase local efficient housing
Promote active, healthy lifestyles	Increase connections to parks, greenspace and recreation centers
Promote equitable access	Increase connectivity to local and regional resources
Support desired future development	Increase coordination with land use plans Promote better integration across jurisdictional lines

**Land Use Issues Identified From Kick-Off**

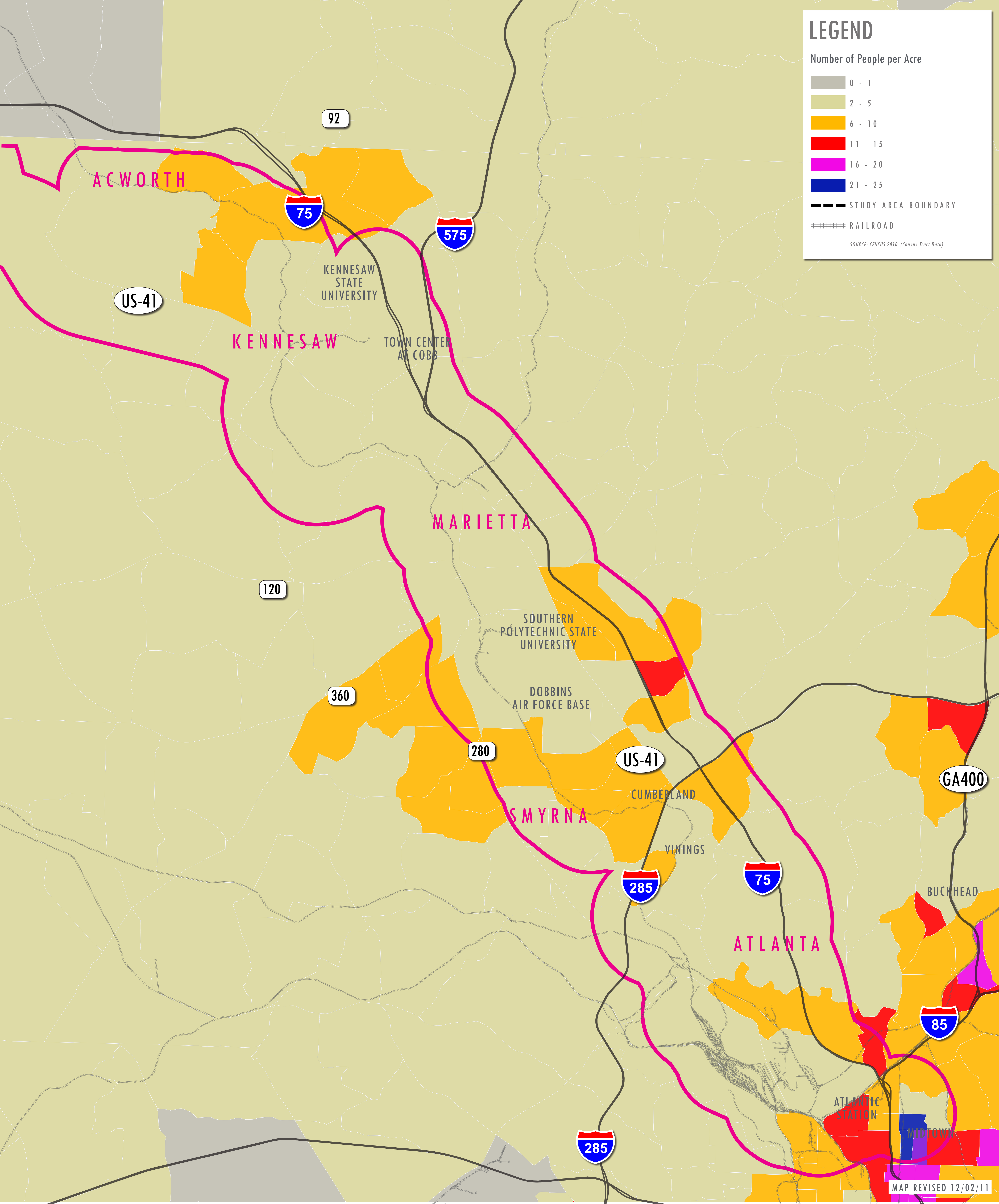
- Connect Cobb County first
- Connect Lockheed, Wellstar, Cobb County School Board line
- How will development and walkability be accomplished along an interstate alignment?
- Improved access to activity centers (employment) in corridor
- Need “hub” to service Life University and SPSU students/employees
- Station spacing: closer = better local use and loading, slower end to end VS. apart = less local use and faster end to end
- Support for stations along I-75 may be lacking in NW Atlanta
- People move here for jobs – choose house for (1) school district (2) safe community. Transit should support both, not create negative factors.
- How will development and walkability be accomplished along an interstate alignment?
- Include input from residents of the City of Atlanta as it affects our neighborhoods.

**Connections Identified from Kick-Off**

- Lake Park Dr/US 41 800K+ square foot office
- West Paces Ferry Rd at I-75, Atlanta Beltline, Atlantic Station
- Connect Cumberland to Arts Center Station.
- Connect Cumberland to KSU (approximately 22,000 single occupancy vehicles)
- Connection to Smyrna
- Connections to all major employees and universities
- Convenient access and parking

- Dallas Hwy at Paulding County Line
- Downtown Marietta
- Employment/activity centers on US41 Dobbins AFB/Lockheed/Clay NGL, KSU, Cobb Energy, etc.
- Financial center at Lenox-Buckhead
- KSU – Town Center – Cumberland - Midtown
- KSU!
- MARTA at 400
- Must have rail connection from Cumberland to MARTA south and north to Kennesaw (at some point).
- East connection to Perimeter at some point.
- System should be implemented in stages and made to be expandable in future (Gwinnett, Alpharetta, etc)
- Perimeter Mall Circulator to Northside Hospital
- Sixes Road
- Transit to big events, Braves game, bus service to Falcons, GA Tech
- Woodstock





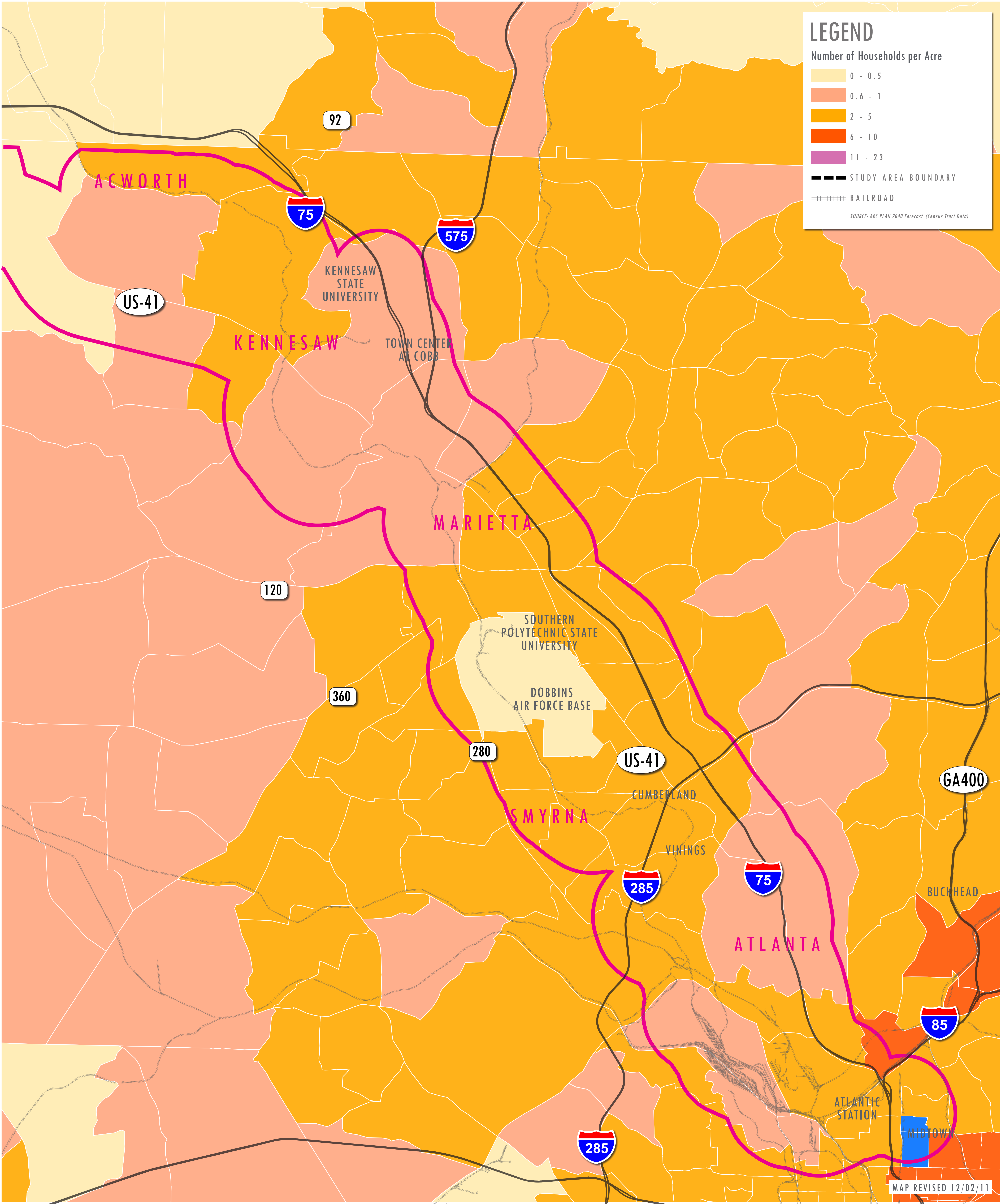
# CURRENT POPULATION DENSITY

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND BAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

## CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis



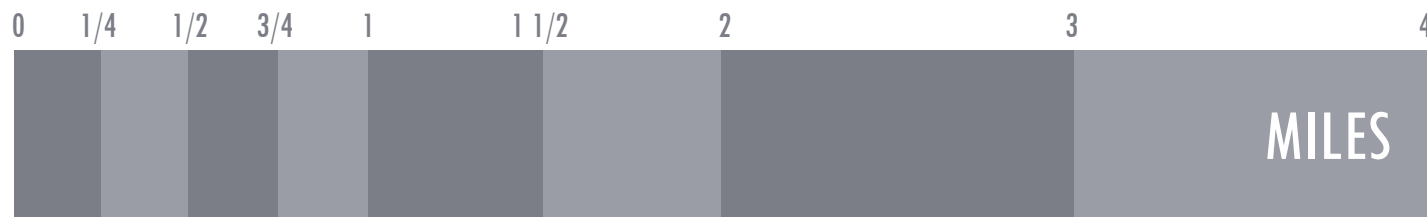




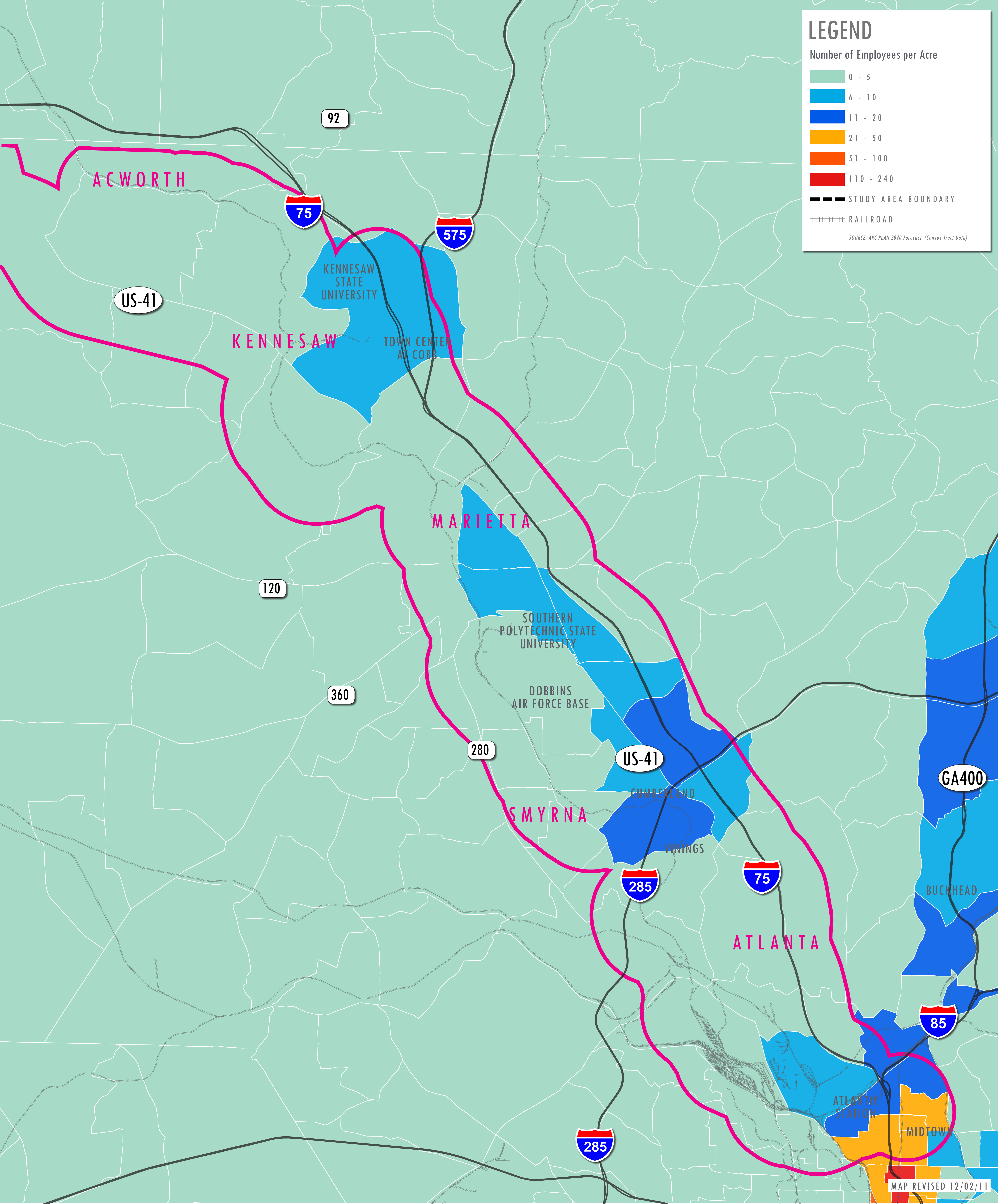
## CURRENT HOUSEHOLD DENSITY

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## CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis



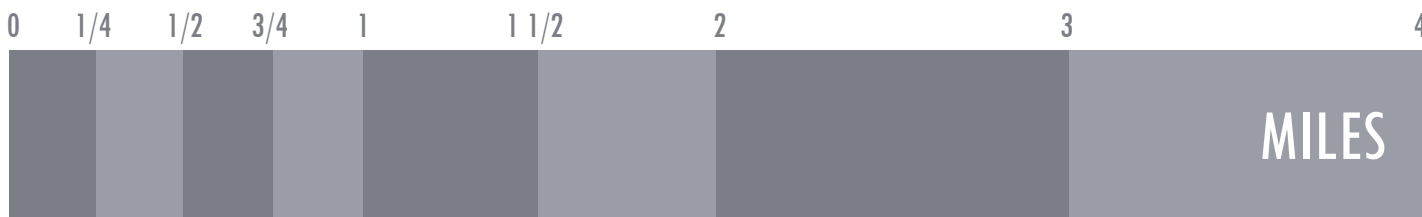




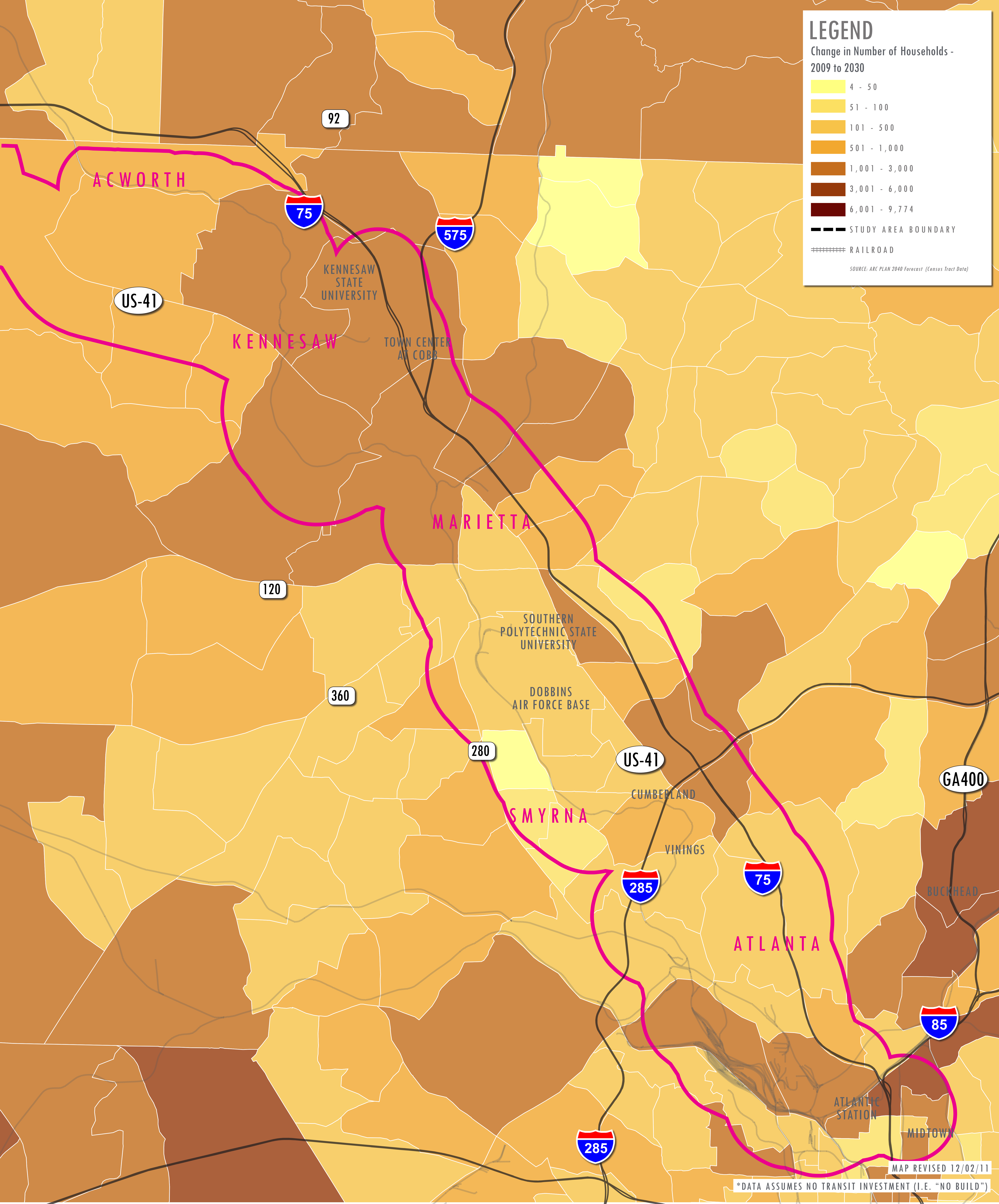
# CURRENT EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

LAND USE/MARKET ANALYSIS PREPARED BY URBAN COLLAGE, INC. AND BAE URBAN ECONOMICS FOR COBB COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

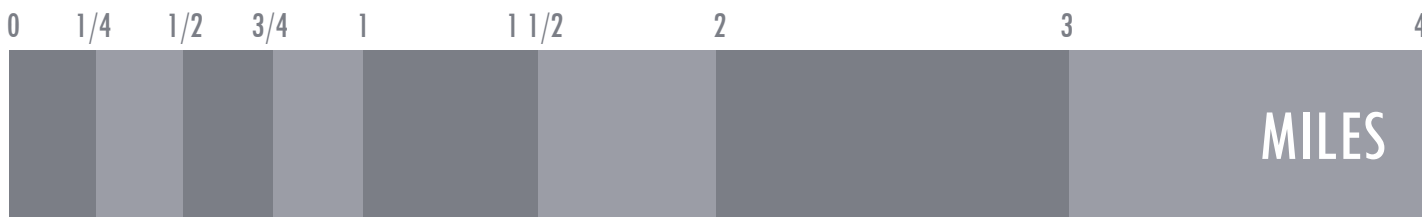
## CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis



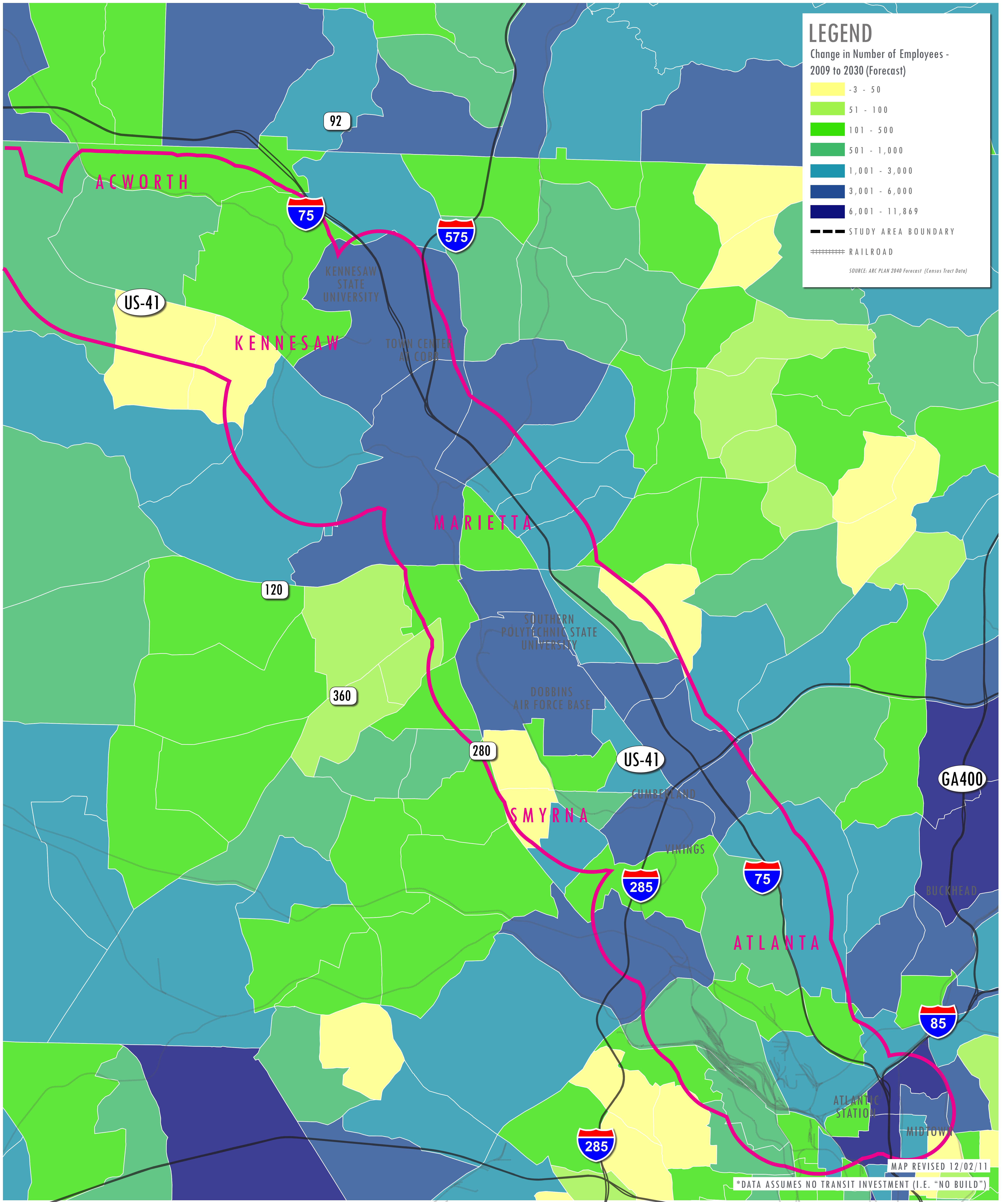




**PROJECTED HOUSEHOLD GROWTH: 2009-2030\***  
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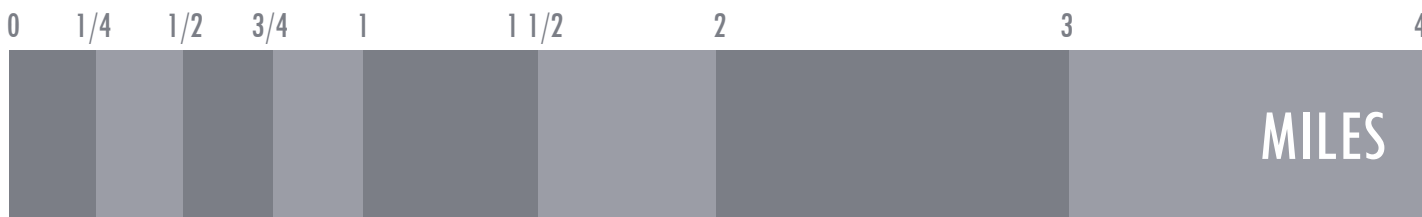
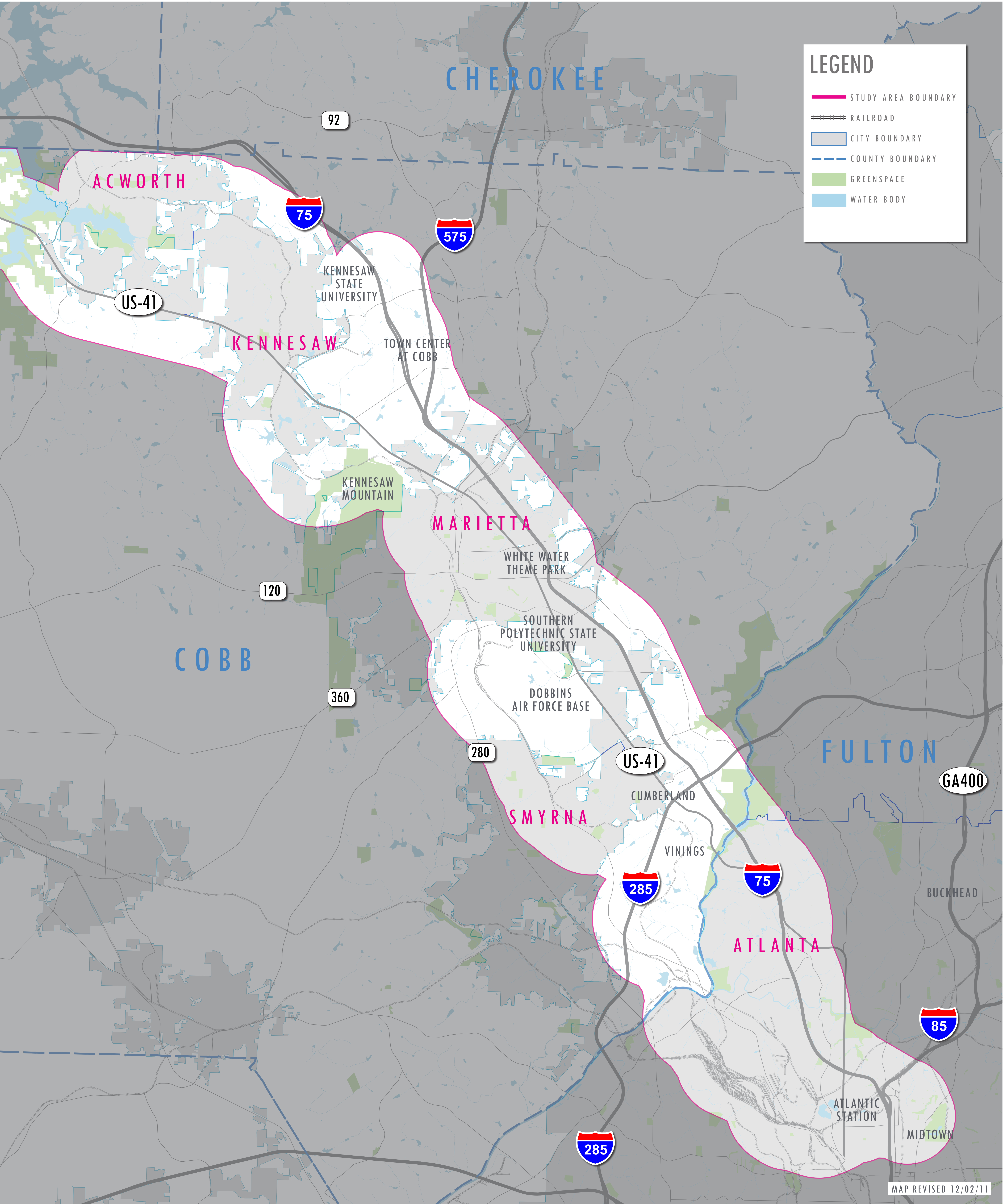


**PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT GROWTH: 2009-2030\***

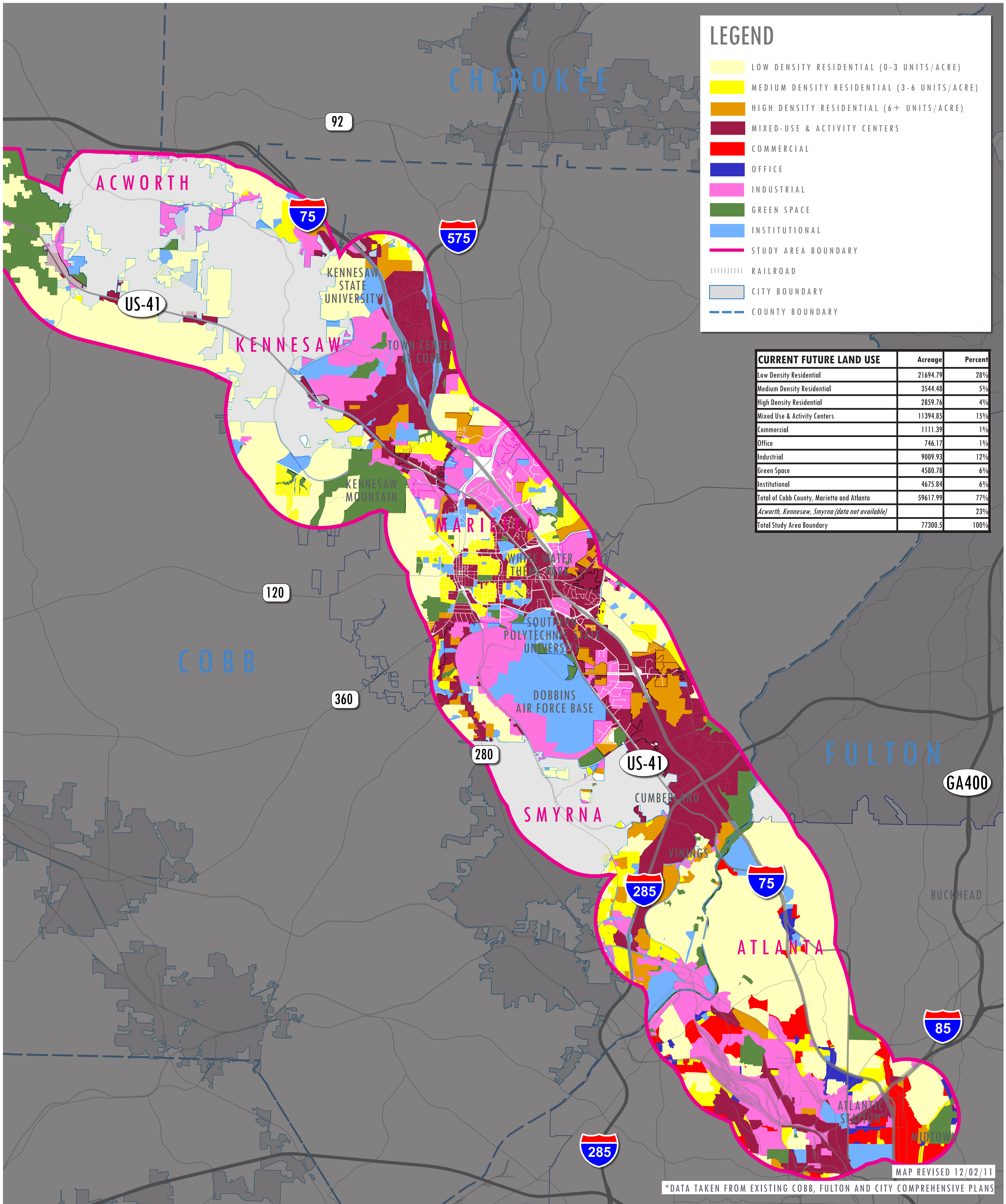
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# CURRENT FUTURE LAND USE POLICIES\*

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## CONNECT COBB: Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis

